DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 146 542 CS 003 662

AUTHOR DiPasalegne, Rosalee W.; Ogletree, Earl J.
TITLE An Assessment of DISTAR by Chicagc Innercity Teachers.
PUB DATE [76]
NOTE 10p.; Study prepared at Chicagc State University; See related documents CS 003 662-664; Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Arithmetic; Beginning Reading; Black Students; *Compensatory Education Programs; *Disadvantaged Youth; *Inner City; Preschool Education; Primary Education; Programed Instructicn; *Program Evaluation; Reading Instruction; *Reading Programs; *Reading Research; Remedial Instruction; Slow Learners; Surveys; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Distar Reading Program; Illinois (Chicago)

ABSTRACT

The Direct Instructional System for Teaching Arithmetic and Reading (DISTAR) was developed tc provide beginning and remedial instruction to disadvantaged children in preschool and the primary grades. The method places heavy emphasis on structure, programmed learning, drill, and repetition. To determine teachers' opinions of the DISTAR reading program, a questionnaire was administered to Chicago public school teachers who used DISTAR. The teacher sample consisted of 105 randomly chosen primary teachers from 11 inner-city elementary schools located in predominantly black communities. This report summarizes the results of the survey and lists recommendations made by teachers for improvement of the effectiveness of the DISTAR program. The report notes that the majority of teachers had a positive opinion of DISTAR. They thought that the program was effective with most children, particularly with slow learners, and they found that pupils liked the program. However, teachers thought that DISTAR was not effective with all children, and a majority of teachers had modified the materials and presentation of the program to meet the needs of their own individual situations. (GW)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED146542

An Assessment of DISTAR by Chicago Innercity Teachers

by

Rosalee W. DiPasalegne

&

Earl J. Ogletree

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Rosalee W. DiPasalegne
Earl J. Ogletree
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

To meet the needs of disadvantaged children, many compensation and intervention programs were developed. DISTAR is one such program adopted by the Chicago Public Schools. As with any innovative program, controversy is generated regarding its methodology and effectiveness.

DISTAR, the "Direct Instructional System for Teaching Arithmetic and Reading", was developed by Siegfried Englemann and Carl Bereiter to provide beginning and remedial language and reading instruction to preschool and primary socially deprived children. However, DISTAR teaching methods have stirred up a great deal of controversy because of the heavy emphasis on structure, programmed learning, drill, and repetition.(1) The argument most frequently discussed is that not only are the pupils programmed, but the teachers are programmed as well, leaving little flexibility for creative teaching. On the other hand, DISTAR has shown to be successful with disadvantaged children, retarded children, and children with learning disabilities.(2)

However, another method to determine whether a program

CS003662

BEST COPY

is working or not is to have teachers responsible for its implementation to evaluate its strong and weak points. Teachers' working opinion gives another demension to program evaluation. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine DISTAR Teachers' opinion of DISTAR as a reading program for socailly disadvantaged children.

Procedure of the Study

To determine teachers' opinion of DISTAR as a reading program for disadvantaged children, a self-devised questionnaire was developed to provided answers to the following questions:

1. Do teachers like the DISTAR System?
2. How effective is the program?
3. How do pupils react to DISTAR?
4. Do teachers follow the prescribed format of the DISTAR program?

The twenty-six objective item questionnaire (with one open-ended question) was administered to a random sample of 105 primary Chicago Public School teachers, who had one to four years of experience teaching DISTAR. The teacher sample was selected from eleven innercity elementary schools, located in predominately Black communities.

Data were tabulated by the percentage of responses to each question.

Results

The basic reaction of the 105 teachers to DISTAR was

favorable. They thought the program was effective with most children and, in particular, slow children, who also liked the program. Teachers recommended a revision in the DISTAR program.

Teacher Reaction to DISTAR

Sixty-five percent of the teachers stated that DISTAR was a good method of teaching reading. Even though 65 percent of the teachers favored DISTAR, only 37 percent indicated that they would used the approach in another subject area, if given the opportunity. On the other hand, a majority (57 percent) of the teachers indicated that they would not use DISTAR if they had the option. The following general comments indicate why they favored DISTAR:

> The DISTAR Language Program is an excellent tool for teaching concepts to children at the primary level. It explains and reinforces concepts such as; between, above, below, etc. As the child advances, he is introduced to more difficult skills. DISTAR is particularity helpful to slow learners, because it is repetitious and enables each child to acquire success. The storybook delights the children and teaches them values for living.

The structured format of the DISTAR program was seen as a positive feature by 62 percent of the teachers and 83 percent of the teachers said they felt confident teaching DISTAR.

Effectiveness of DISTAR

The majority of teachers indicated DISTAR was effective. Eighty-eight percent stated that most of the children learned

the materials; 61 percent indicated children were reading at a normal rate; 68 percent felt DISTAR was effective with slow learners and 57 percent with EMH children. Seventy-eight percent were confident that DISTAR could be used effectively in any classroom.

On the other hand, only 10 percent of the teachers thought DISTAR was effective with all children and only 42 percent felt DISTAR was equal or superior to other reading methods. This negative attitude is reflected in their general comments:

> The children have trouble making the transition form DISTAR print to regular print in reading. If a word is not written in DISTAR, many of them cannot read it. For example: lake, eagle, need, my, and shore. They would be able to read in DISTAR, but, not in other books.

The response to whether DISTAR tests effectively measure student achievement was divided 47 percent yes to 35 percent no. Typical comments were:

> ...Tests do not seem to evaluate the basic reading skills as the basal reading program does...

A majority (59 percent) of the teachers felt that the "take-homes" were effective motivational aids, but needed some revision to make them more effective and interesting.

Eighty-three percent indicated that they taught DISTAR every day and 17 percent indicated that they did not. The majority (62 percent) of teachers did not feel that the DISTAR program was too structured which indicated compatibility

with their teaching style.

Pupil Reaction

Pupils' reaction to DISTAR supports the need for some type of revision. Although 79 percent of the teachers felt that the children liked DISTAR, they were evenly divided (42 percent to 41 percent) as to children's boredom with the repetition.

The teachers were also divided on the level of attention span of children in the DISTAR program compared to their attention span with other subjects. Forty-seven percent stated that it was the same, while forty-one percent indicated it was less.

Teachers' Revision of DISTAR

Results show that almost an equal number of teachers had (56 percent) and had not (44 percent) modified or revised the program in one form or another. The majority did not adhere to the programmed instructions. Some changed the format, hand signals, materials, and the "Take-Homes." Some teachers stated:

> ...I do some experimenting to make the program more meaningful for the children.
>
> I adapted it to meet the needs of the students. Repeated lessons for the slower ones, skip or do two lessons each day with more advanced pupils.

Thirty-four percent of the teachers reasoned that written work was not encouraged; 51 percent felt that the program did build vocabulary or teach decoding skills.

On the other hand, fifty-one percent stated "the illustrations and story content was appealing to the children," while 39 percent felt the children got restless with so much repetition.

Summary of Findings:

The majority of teachers found:

1. DISTAR was easy to use.
2. They liked the highly structured format.
3. Teachers were confident in using DISTAR
4. Most children were readily learning the DISTAR materials.
5. Sections of DISTAR could be used in any class.
6. DISTAR was most effective with slow learners.
7. The children liked DISTAR.
8. Modification and revision were necessary to make DISTAR more effective.
9. A Teacher-aide was necessary.
10. They would not like to teach another subject using DISTAR.
11. DISTAR was not effective with all children.

Teachers made the following recommendations:

1. Teachers should be allowed to modify materials, format, etc., to fit their teaching style.
2. Materials should be continually revised, based on teachers' recommendations to DISTAR publisher, Science Research Associates.

3. If materials seem to be boring to children who are not slow learners, they should be put in another DISTAR group.
4. Perhaps DISTAR could be used as an optional or supplementary reading program in conjunction with other methods of teaching reading.
5. A part-time teacher-aide should be assigned to every DISTAR teacher.
6. Children should be taught the regular print along with DISTAR print to avoid the confusion in the transition to other reading materials.
7. Reading and DISTAR Language kits should be used together to make lessons more concurrent.
8. Teachers and students should be able to express their own creativity in relationship to DISTAR.
9. Students' and teachers' books should be coordinated so that there is no discrepancy in directions and/or activity.

Conclusions

The findings indicate that teachers' opinion of DISTAR was positive, supported by the effectiveness of the program

and pupils' reaction to it. However, teachers were not wholly satisfied with DISTAR as an exclusive program in that it was not effective with all children and that a majority found a need to modify the materials and presentation to their teaching style and the needs of the pupils. They generally demonstrated that no single reading program can be successful with all students. DISTAR is no acception.

REFERRNCES

1 Sarah Traister Mokovitz, "Some Assuptions Underlying the Bereiter Approach," Young Children 24 (October 1968): 24-31.

2 Lynne Guinet, Evaluation of Distar Materials in Three Junior Learning Assistance Classes (Vancouver, B.C.: July 1971), pp. 2-4.